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Ex-Colonel Denies CBS Documentary Assertion

By M. A. FARBER

A former military intelligence officer in South Vietnam yesterday denied an assertion in a CBS Reports documentary that a lieutenant colonel was "fired" because he wanted to report a high rate of North Vietnamese infiltration in 1967.

Col. Charles A. Morris testified in Federal Court yesterday that the report was untrue. He said that the officer, Lieut. Col. Everette S. Parkins, was relieved of his duties because "he refused to carry out a legal order" to devise a better formula for estimating enemy losses.

"And I'd do it again," said Colonel Morris, who was director of intelligence production for General Westmoreland in 1967. He was the fifth witness for General Westmoreland in his \$120 million libel suit against CBS over the 1982 CBS Reports documentary: "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception."

Colonel Morris, a graying, 64-year-old retired officer who spent two years in Vietnam during a long career in military intelligence, said he knew nothing about statements in the documentary that Colonel Parkins wanted to report a monthly infiltration rate of 25,000 — four times the official figure in use in late 1967.

Asked Study on Losses

Colonel Morris said that when he asked Colonel Parkins to undertake the study on enemy losses, "he said it couldn't be done, that it was a waste of time."

"I asked him several times to try," Colonel Morris recalled. "I directed him to try. Then I ordered him from the room and later ordered that he be dismissed."

Dan. M. Burt, General Westmoreland's lawyer, asked Colonel Morris whether the dispute that day related to reports "by Parkins of an infiltration rate of 25,000" North Vietnamese in the months before the Tet offensive of January 1968.

"No," said Colonel Morris.

General Westmoreland, who commanded American forces in Vietnam from 1964 to 1968, contends that CBS libeled him by saying that he had deceived President Johnson and the Joint Chiefs of Staff about the size and nature of Communist forces in South Vietnam in the year before the Tet offensive.

The general specifically accused CBS and several other defendants — including George Crile, the program's producer and Mike Wallace, its narra-

tor — of saying that he had arbitrarily set a ceiling of 300,000 on enemy strength, suppressed reports from his officers of a higher enemy presence and a higher infiltration rate than was made known, and engineered a cover-up of the truth after the offensive.

Interview Not Used

Colonel Morris was interviewed by telephone by Mr. Crile six weeks before the documentary was broadcast on Jan. 23, 1982. None of the colonel's remarks were used on the program, which alleged a "conspiracy at the highest levels of American military intelligence to suppress and alter critical intelligence on the enemy in 1967."

In a pretrial affidavit, Colonel Parkins said he had spoken to Mr. Crile one or more times by telephone, and did not remember the producer asking him about enemy infiltration.

Colonel Parkins said in the affidavit he had been relieved of his duties after an argument with Colonel Morris in November 1967 over a study of Communist forces. He said Colonel Morris "believed that the study should report enemy strength figures lower than the figure I was reporting." But Colonel Parkins said he told Mr. Crile that he did not think there had been a conspiracy to suppress military intelligence.

The 1982 documentary, Colonel Parkins said, "inaccurately portrayed the events that related to myself" and was a "slur" of General Westmoreland. He said he had no recollection of North Vietnamese infiltration in the fall of 1967 being anywhere near as high as 20,000 to 25,000 and "I believe I would recall" it.

At one point on the broadcast, Mr. Wallace said: "CBS Reports has learned that during the five months preceding the Tet offensive, Westmoreland's infiltration analysts had actually been reporting not seven or eight thousand but more than 25,000 North Vietnamese coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail each month, and that amounted to a near invasion. But those reports of a dramatically increased infiltration were systematically blocked."

Mr. Wallace said that Colonel Parkins, "a West Point graduate who planned to make a career of the Army, had become so incensed by MACV's [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] refusal to send on reports of an enemy infiltration of 25,000 a month that he lost his temper and shouted at his superior."

Mr. Crile then appeared on the pro-

gram, talking to Russell Cooley, who was a major in military intelligence in Vietnam in 1967:

Crile: Lieutenant Colonel Parkins was fired for trying to get this report through, and ...

Cooley: He was relieved from his position. The word "fired," yes, he was.

Major Cooley, who eventually became a colonel and is expected to testify for CBS in this trial, went on to blame another intelligence colonel, Daniel Graham, for "blocking the infiltration estimates from going through." Colonel Graham, who, later as a general, became head of the United States Defense Intelligence Agency, was shown in the documentary denying such action.

Defined Infiltrators

Yesterday, Colonel Morris testified that, to be counted in the official tally of infiltrators, North Vietnamese forces had to actually cross into South Vietnamese territory. It wasn't enough, he told the jury, for those forces to move from one spot to another in North Vietnam or along the Ho Chi Minh trail to Laos. That, he said, was known as "infiltration-related activity."

Colonel Morris said the term infiltration "got misused quite often," and he could understand how Mr. Crile "might not pick up on the difference" between infiltration and infiltration-related activity.

Colonel Morris said that, in the fall of 1967, he learned from National Security Agency communications intelligence, and from John L. Michalski, a military intelligence major, of two divisions of North Vietnamese troops that were massing for what ultimately became the siege at Khe Sanh, an American base in northern South Vietnam.

Major Michalski, according to Colonel Morris, advised him that Colonel Graham had said the major was "not ready to report his findings" yet. But Colonel Morris said he overruled Colonel Graham and immediately sent the information up the chain of command.

Colonel Morris, who is scheduled to be followed on the stand today by Gen. Phillip Davidson, chief of military intelligence in Vietnam in 1967, said he had participated in discussions in Saigon with the Central Intelligence Agency over enemy strength figures and had never been instructed to adhere to a total of 300,000, or any particular estimate.